

Message Text

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ACDA-12 DOE-15 SOE-02 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03
NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /129 W
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R 221322Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3955
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMCONSUL TANGIER

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 03118

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, UK, GI, SP
SUBJECT: GOS OFFICIAL ON GIBRALTAR TALKS IN PARIS

REF: MADRID 2045

1. SUMMARY: THE MARCH 15 GIBRALTAR TALKS IN PARIS SHOWED AN APPRECIABLE ADVANCE IN ATMOSPHERE, ACCORDING TO A SPANISH OFFICIAL, AND THE CREATION OF THREE WORKING GROUPS ALSO SHOWS EVOLUTION. THE CORE ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY REMAINS UNTREATED, HOWEVER, AND THE GOS HOPES FOR FURTHER ADVANCES IN THE NEXT ROUND OF SUCH TALKS, SCHEDULED FOR "BEFORE THE END OF SUMMER". END SUMMARY.

2. IN CONFIRMING FOREIGN MINISTER OREJA'S WORDS TO REPORTERS AFTER THE MEETING REGARDING THE "CLIMATE OF CONFIDENCE" AND THE "NOTABLE ADVANCE" OVER THE STRASBOURG TALKS, THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR EUROPE AND ATLANTIC AFFAIRS (ELIAS), WHO WAS AT THE PARIS MEETING, FOCUSED MARCH 21 ON WHAT HE CONSIDERED THE CHANGE IN ATTITUDE SHOWN BY THE TWO
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GIBRALTARIAN REPRESENTATIVES, WHO HE WAS CAREFUL AS ALWAYS TO NOTE FORMED PART OF THE BRITISH DELEGATION. THEY REMAINED, HOWEVER, STICKY ON THE SOVEREIGNTY ISSUE, ELIAS SAID, ESPECIALLY OPPOSITION LEADER XIBERRAS.

3. IN FACT, SAID ELIAS, EVERYONE EXCEPT XIBERRAS HAD BEEN PREPARED TO ACCEPT LANGUAGE IN THE COMMUNIQUE

ACCORDING TO WHICH FUTURE TALKS WOULD DISCUSS "ALL ASPECTS" OF THE GIBRALTAR QUESTION. SINCE IT WAS UNDERSTOOD THIS MEANT SOVEREIGNTY WAS AT ISSUE, THE SPANISH WERE PLEASED, BUT XIBERRAS HELD OUT, APPARENTLY SOMEWHAT DISCOMFITED BUT ALLEGING CONCERNS OVER HIS CONSTITUENTS. HE WAS ALSO THE ONLY ONE TO REJECT THE ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTION "THE VARIOUS ASPECTS", CALLING FOR SUPPRESSION OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE, WHICH THE SPANISH WERE UNWILLING TO ACCEPT. WHEN THE PHRASE THEN BECAME SIMPLY "THE GIBRALTAR QUESTION", THE BRITISH OFFERED AS A CONCESSION AN ADDITIONAL SENTENCE THAT TALKS SHOULD BE HELD ON "THE FUTURE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN SPAIN AND THE UK IN RELATION WITH GIBRALTAR", A FORMULATION WHICH PLEASED THE SPANISH BECAUSE OF ITS CLEAR CONNOTATION OF EXPECTED CHANGE, ELIAS SAID. THE PHRASE WAS ACCEPTED ALL AROUND.

4. THE TALKS ALSO RESULTED IN AGREEMENT ON THE CREATION OF THREE WORKING GROUPS, ACCORDING TO ELIAS (AGAIN CONFIRMING PRESS ACCOUNTS OF REMARKS BY OREJA):

--TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN GIBRALTAR AND SPAIN (ELIAS VOLUNTEERED HIS "PERSONAL" EXPECTATION THAT TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS WOULD BE MAINTAINED);

--MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS; AND
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--SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS TO SPANISH WORKERS EMPLOYED ON THE ROCK UNTIL THE SPANISH RESTRICTIONS WENT INTO FORCE. (ELIAS THOUGHT THIS COULD BE A TOUGH ONE, SINCE IT INVOLVED DETERMINING WHO WOULD PAY HOW MUCH TO WHOM.)

5. SPAIN REMAINS FLEXIBLE AND UNDERSTANDING REGARDING THE MILITARY BASE ON GIBRALTAR, ACCORDING TO ELIAS, RECOGNIZING THAT BRITAIN WOULD NOT WANT TO LOSE SO STRATEGICALLY VALUABLE AN INSTALLATION. THE GOS WOULD BE PREPARED, HE SAID, TO REACH SOME ARRANGEMENT LIKE WHAT IT HAS WITH THE US IN ROTA. THE GOS HAS NOT WANTED TO DISCUSS THE MILITARY BASE QUESTION IN TALKS WHICH INCLUDE THE GIBRALTARIANS, FOR FEAR OF PUTTING THE BRITISH IN A POSSIBLY EMBARRASSING POSITION, HE WENT ON, BUT THERE ARE OTHER CHANNELS, INCLUDING ORDINARY DIPLOMATIC ONES, FOR DISCUSSING THIS SPECIFIC QUESTION.

6. FOR ALL THE ADVANCE IN ATMOSPHERE, ELIAS SAID, THE GOS WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE, AND HE CITED A SPECIFIC: THAT THE GIBRALTARIANS SHIFT FROM THE NEGATIVE "WE WILL NOT DISCUSS SOVEREIGNTY AS LONG AS THE RESTRICTIONS ARE

NOT LIFTED" TO THE POSITIVE "WE WILL DISCUSS SOVEREIGNTY WHEN THEY ARE LIFTED". THE SPANISH HAD ALREADY SUGGESTED TO THE BRITISH THEY URGE SUCH A SHIFT ON THE GIBRALTARIANS, BUT IT COULD ALSO BE WELL, ELIAS SAID (REITERATING PREVIOUS SPANISH HINTS THAT WE WEIGH IN WITH THE BRITISH), IF "GOOD FRIENDS" COULD PROVIDE HMG SOME "FRIENDLY ADVICE".

7. WHILE THE PHRASE "BEFORE THE END OF THE SUMMER" SUGGESTS THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS (WHICH MAY WELL BE IN EITHER LONDON OR MADRID) MIGHT TAKE PLACE IN JULY OR AUGUST, ELIAS CONCLUDED, IT ALSO SEEMED REASONABLE THAT THEY AWAIT AT LEAST SOME PROGRESS ON THE

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PART OF THE WORKING GROUPS STILL TO BE ESTABLISHED. SOME DELAY IN THE NEXT ROUND, THEREFORE, COULD ENSUE.

8. COMMENT: ELIAS SEEMED GENUINELY PLEASED WITH THE ADVANCE THE PARIS ROUND REPRESENTED OVER THE EARLIER STRASBOURG TALKS, AND WE NOTE THAT SIR JOSHUA HASSAN ALSO SPOKE OF THE "IMPROVEMENT" AND THE "CONFIDENCE CREATED BETWEEN THE DELEGATIONS" IN AN INTERVIEW CARRIED IN THE MADRID DAILY YA. SOVEREIGNTY REMAINS THE KEY ISSUE, WITH THE GOS HOPING TO CONTINUE TO EDGE TOWARD ITS SPECIFIC INCLUSION IN THE TALKS. ELIAS' SUGGESTION THAT THE GIBRALTAR MILITARY BASE MIGHT COME TO BE TREATED SIMILARLY TO US FACILITIES IN SPAIN IS THE MOST SPECIFIC INDICATION WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR OF SPANISH THINKING ON THIS POINT, AND HAS A MORE NARROW AND RESTRICTIVE RING

THAN THE PREVIOUS ASSERTIONS, VAGUE AND REASSURING, OF
FLEXIBILITY AND UNDERSTANDING ON THIS POINT. END COMMENT.
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